



**For Immediate Release**

**Date:** June 17, 2022

## **Utah County Attorney David Leavitt corrects misperceptions regarding the SVU unit.**

Reports in the press and on social media are perpetuating that County Attorney David Leavitt removed the Sexual Victims Unit (SVU) and stopped prosecuting. The residents of this county should have access to factual information. Our office posted updated statistical information and guiding principles about sexual assault prosecution. Posted on the Utah County Attorney's website on the main page. ([ucao.utahcounty.gov](http://ucao.utahcounty.gov))

Did the Utah County Attorney's office terminate SVU? No. Under the old system, a small team of attorneys carried a 400+ case backlog, many from prior years. Because the case backlog was not being resolved, we adopted an "all hands on deck" approach to screen and charge cases.

"You don't perpetuate poorly functioning systems and expect them to succeed," states David Leavitt, Utah County Attorney. "We brought the backlog current, SVU prosecution is a priority in the office, and we dedicate substantial resources to it."

The office has focused on hiring SVU-experienced prosecutors and by dedicating more resources and training, we now have an office where 90% of prosecutors have training in aspects of sexual assault prosecution.

"There is always an opportunity to improve systems, track outcomes, and increase professional skills. We want the public to understand that we are seeing successes and we are committed," says Chief Deputy Sandi Johnson.

"Our office would appreciate the media's help in correcting a public perception that we are not prosecuting SVU. It is simply not true. We want victims to come forward. We want to hold perpetrators accountable. It's a dangerous perspective that hurts the community." said Sherrie Hall Everett, public information officer for the office.

Data on declinations and filings, the number of prosecutions of felony and misdemeanors, and graphics about the old vs. new structure of the SVU organization are available in the report.

Website: <http://ucao.utah.gov>

[Report Direct Link](#)

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